

Adoption Day a source of joy for courts, children and 'forever' families

By CHUCK SNYDER

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Six years ago Whatcom County Superior Court held its first celebration of National Adoption Day. Those of us involved really didn't know what to expect, but we made arrangements to finalize adoptions for what then seemed to be a large number of families and children. When the day had come and gone we were all changed. New families were created, children had permanent homes and parents, and friends of the families, court staff, judges and anyone else nearby felt the joy of helping children find a place to call home. On Nov. 22, we will do it all again but with the knowledge that it has become bigger than we ever imagined.

Little did we know in 2008 that this was only the beginning. Soon we had three times as many families and children as in the first year. Families continue to want to be a part of this wonderful, chaotic, but ultimately happy day. Through the years since that first day, many from our Whatcom County community have joined in to make the process better and easier. We have finalized over 100 adoptions through the past six years. Organizations such as Hope 1.27, His Kids Our Homes, Superior Court staff, private adoption facilitators, attorneys, volunteers, elected officials and generous people, companies and organizations throughout Whatcom County all worked together to make this a memorable day for each child, parent and relative involved. Photographers donated time and provided photos and website access to galleries of images. Individuals donated everything from public address systems to food, gift bags, entertainment for the children and, not least, their time. This is truly a partnership of many.

National Adoption Day was founded in the year 2000 by a coalition of national child welfare organizations hoping to raise awareness of the thousands of foster children available for adoption and awaiting permanent "forever" families. Every day in America children who entered the foster care system as victims of abuse or neglect become available for adoption. Most children in foster care wait nearly five years and will have moved at least three times before finally being adopted. In Washington alone, more than 10,000 children live in foster care and more than 2,000 children are available right now for adoption.

National Adoption Day is celebrated across the nation in late November. Children who have spent part of their childhood in foster homes have had their dreams of a real, permanent family come true. Adoptive parents, after many months of dealing with what can be a convoluted and frustrating legal process, have come to that destination that they probably thought at some point they would never see. Parents adopting children from overseas have met others doing the same thing, and have found friends, allies and helpers. Those who work in the child welfare system have seen that their hard work and dedication to the well-being of children can bring great results. Those of us in the courts have had our faith in human nature restored. It is not

uncommon, in Whatcom County, to have families come back in successive years to adopt yet another child, showing that human kindness can be boundless.

As a Whatcom County Superior Court judge, the most enjoyable days to me are the days I am able to finalize an adoption. It's a time when a child enters a new family and a new chapter in their young life. Children from all over not only become a part of a new household and community but sometimes a new country too. Children who have lived in foster care, suffered from abuse or neglect or who have been abandoned by their parents now get the one thing that they want the most - a "forever" family. It is truly a life-changing event.

It will prove to be a time of great joy and, for me as a judge, an absolute honor to be a part of. Every adoption takes a lot of caring people to make it to finalization and, once again, a dedicated group of people in Whatcom County have worked hard to bring this day to fruition. To each of them, on behalf of the children and their new families, I again give my heartfelt thanks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judge Chuck Snyder has served in Whatcom County Superior Court since 1989 as both a Court Commissioner and as an elected judge. He is currently the President Judge of the Superior Court Judges Association of Washington.

Read more here: <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2013/11/18/3313562/adoption-day-a-source-of-joy-for.html##storylink=cpy>